

care development centers, to ensure that the children are receiving a nutritious diet.

In short, MAOF has been at the forefront of helping the people of the community advance and prosper through work and education.

Mr. Speaker, it is with pride that I rise to recognize one of the finest community organizations in the country, the Mexican-American Opportunity Foundation, and its founder, Mr. Dionicio Morales. I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating them and wishing them continued success in their new facility.

COMMEMORATING THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

SPEECH OF

HON. GEORGE P. RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 2, 1995

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, this evening I want to enter into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD statements written by two young Armenian students from my district. These letters were written about the Armenian genocide and were selected as award winning essays by the Central California chapter of the Armenian National Committee.

These essays are statements about the suffering the Armenian people incurred at the hands of the Ottoman Turkish government, and about remembering the victims of the genocide. I am honored to represent thousands of Armenians in my district, and equally honored that I can count essay award winners Taleen Kojayan and Denyse Kachadoorian among them.

MANY REASONS TO REMEMBER

(By Taleen Kojayan)

Everyone knows about the Jews and the Holocaust, about the horrible agony they were put through by the Germans. But who knows about what began on the terrible day, April 24, 1915? To most people this is just an ordinary day from the past. It has no meaning, no significance. But, to every proud Armenian, this date means anguish and grief. It reminds them of the torture their people went through years before. It reminds them of Armenian genocide.

"Armenian genocide? Is that the German thing?" said someone. When the word "genocide" is heard, that's what most people think of. Little do they know that there was another genocide, where two-thirds of a nation was wiped off the face of this Earth. One and one-half million Armenian men, women and children massacred.

Who is responsible for the dreadful butchery of the Armenian people? The answer is clear. There is no doubt that the Turks were the ones who wanted to get rid of the Armenians for good.

This wasn't the first time that the Turks had harmed the Armenians. There is a history of conflict between them. For example in 1896, the Turks managed to kill 300,000 Armenians. There were also other instances during 1894, which is the time they began their campaign to wipe out the Armenians.

Of course it isn't logical that 1.5 million Armenians were killed in one single day. The day April 24 was chosen as the beginning for a special reason. On this day, about 200 Armenian intellectuals were gathered from the Turkish city of Istanbul. They were taken to central Turkey and were never heard from again. People are weaker without their lead-

ers, and the Turks knew that. This marked the start of the Armenian genocide.

The first place they wanted "Armenian-free" was Istanbul. Many Armenians lived there who had power and money. They owned businesses and controlled the markets. The Turks were tired of being outnumbered by Armenians in their own city. So, they walked out in the streets beating a big drum. They said they needed Armenian men between the ages of 16 and 60 to fight in the war for them. That was just an excuse.

Some of the richer Armenians paid a fee, called the *Bedel*, to try to get their sons out of the fighting. Even though the fee was paid, it was ignored and the men still had to go. Others might have known that there was more to the story than what they were being told.

The Turks could have killed the people right there in Istanbul, so why didn't they? Well, the killing couldn't go on in Istanbul because it was close to Europe. The Turks couldn't run the risk of anyone knowing. So, the people were rounded up, taken to central Turkey and then massacred just like the intellectuals.

So began three years of pain and death for the Armenian people. They were tortured in many ways. Most were sent out into the desert with no food or water. It soon became the grave of many helpless Armenians, including a member of my grandfather's family. Some people were hung, and some were shot. The heads of others who were beheaded were displayed on wooden poles. Some little girls who survived this horrible ordeal were found in other homes.

All of this suffering, and who knows about it? No one knows, and no one cares about what happened to us. Why are the Armenians so unimportant to this world? Yes, the massacre happened, and no, we shouldn't live in the past. But something like this should not and cannot be forgotten. When the extermination of a whole race of people is attempted, everyone should remember so that they will learn from our mistakes.

"After all, who remembers today the extermination of the Armenians?"

—Adolf Hitler, Aug. 22, 1939.

We shouldn't forget that the Armenian people made it through. They strived to make sure that the Turks did not succeed. And they accomplished just that, or else I wouldn't be here today. The Armenians survived, and will continue to do so.

"Go ahead, destroy Armenia. See if you can do it. Send them into the desert without bread or water. Burn their homes and churches. Then see if they will not laugh, sing and pray again. For when two of them meet anywhere in the world, see if they will not create a new Armenia."

—William Saroyan.

[Taleen Kojayan is a 10th-grade student at Clovis West High School.]

HORRID MEANS OF SUFFERING

"We will forget our terrible wound and our grief. We will forget, won't we? If we return to our land."

—Vahan Tekeyan, 1918.

(By Denyse Kachadoorian)

Genocide can be defined in five acts: killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, imposing measures intended to prevent births within the groups, or forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. Unfortunately the Armenians living in 1915 experienced these inconceivable acts, but the survivors struggled and overcame many hardships to rebuild their race.

The "Armenian Experience" started during the late 1800s. Armenians suffered greatly under Turkish rule from discrimination, heavy taxation and armed attacks. From 1894 to 1896, the Turks and Kurds, under Sultan Abdul-Hamid II, carried out a campaign to erase Armenians. Hundreds of thousands were killed.

During World War I, Armenia became a battleground between Turkey and Russia. The Turks feared the Armenians would aid the Russians. As a result, they deported Armenians living in Turkish Armenia into the desert of present-day Syria. Approximately 1 million Armenians died of starvation or lack of water alone. Several others fled to Russian Armenia and in 1918 formed an independent republic.

The Armenians people endured horrendous types of suffering—physical, emotional and tragic moral choices. Hunger plagued the minds of many Armenians in 1915. Some people were reduced to eating grass, similar to cattle grazing.

Several diseases were contracted during this time; typhus, dysentery, malaria and others. Lice was a familiar problem for these Armenians. Children who entered orphanages were deloused before anything else. Armenians were forced to live as wild animals, exposed to desert heat by day and freezing cold or rain at night.

Beyond the physical pain, the genocide victims had to deal with emotional suffering. Practically every survivor can name a family member who was murdered during this period.

Although the massacre occurred almost 80 years ago, it continues to touch the present generations. My paternal grandmother, born in 1911 in Armenia, was a survivor. She vividly described her family situation as homeless and broke. Her father, grandfather and uncle were all captured and presumably murdered. They were forced to abandon their homes and linger around the town for any sign of assistance. Relief arrived soon when an uncle, who lived in the United States, gave them enough money to emigrate to America.

In 1915, the world became aware of the Armenian genocide by newspapers, books, articles, official investigations and eyewitness accounts. Even following these valid accounts, the U.S. government has denied April 24 as a day of national recognition of the Armenian Genocide. The debates of 1985 and 1990 clearly reveal that the world is still withholding a formal declaration of these terrible events. The reason behind the U.S. government's decision for rejecting the day is that Turkey is an important NATO ally and jeopardizing the national security over an issue so insignificant would not be in the best interests of the American public.

As a result, the American government denied the day of remembrance to Armenians. This decision was hard to swallow for Armenian-Americans. They felt that the government to which they held allegiance to, contributed to and fought for had slighted them as a race. Armenians who began a new life in the United States decided to put aside their troubles and past experiences and work hard in their new homeland. Their determination and work ethic enabled them to blossom into reputable citizens of this country.

These survivors have rebuilt a proud race with strong family unity, despite the disappointing fact that they are disregarded as victims of an international atrocity by their government. Nevertheless, Armenians are proud of themselves, their fellow brothers and their history.

[Denyse Kachadoorian is in the 11th grade at Bullard High School.]